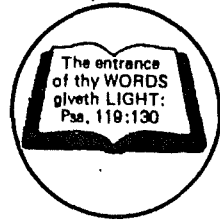


Perspectives

in Covenant Education



The Holstege Family
See "Parents' Corner" — page 30

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SPECIAL FOCUS

To drop suddenly out of the work of the classroom must be difficult for one who has been happily involved in it for well-nigh forty years. Retirement does, no doubt, bring with it some sense of relief — since years do take their toll even on the strongest of men and women. At the same time, there's no way that a teacher, who has truly enjoyed a good working relationship with children and young people, can just pack up her files and leave, without a sense of loss. Miss Koole testifies to the truth of that. Something of what gave purpose to life is gone, when September rolls around. . . and one stays at home. It's no simple matter, either, to come up with a substitute that satisfies.

The sense of loss, however, is not the experience only of the teacher who is retiring. In Miss Koole's case, at least, it's shared by those who are left behind — students, parents, fellow-teachers. Her delightful rapport with children, her wry wit, her helpfulness, her unpretentious spirit — all will be sorely missed, in the classroom and in the faculty room.

All those things, however, do not have to be missed by our Perspectives readers. All you need do, to continue to enjoy and benefit from them, is write "Dear Miss Koole." Our rubric by that name, you know, is still alive, howbeit not very well. . . hurting as it is from a lack of questions from our readers. With retirement, Miss Koole may have lost her class; but she's still able to give first-class advice. And since she has lots of time on her hands now, she'd like nothing better than to sit down and write on topics concerning which you, our readers, have questions. Let's keep her busy. Address your questions to:

**Dear Miss Koole
2068 Cranbrook Dr. N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49505**

Meanwhile, we add our voice to that of Miss Agatha Lubbers, who in the tribute to Miss Koole that follows, wishes to her God's blessing in retirement.

Veteran Teacher Retires

Agatha Lubbers

The gift of a Christian teacher to the church and to the children of believing parents cannot be measured in monetary terms. Christian teachers, who have given their life to the profession, will be the first to admit that although teachers give much they also are the chief beneficiaries in the educational process. Miss Koole, who retired this year after a very fruitful teaching career, has frequently said that the most rewarding part of her day was the time

that she spent in devotions and teaching Bible to her students.

In September of 1950 Adams Street Christian School first opened its doors; and one of the teachers who greeted the students that morning was Miss Winifred Koole. In June of 1989, Miss Koole's teaching career came to an official conclusion. Thirty-nine happy and blessed years she had spent teaching covenant children in two different schools—Adams Street and Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. For the first time in thirty-nine years Miss Koole would not, in September, greet a new group of students with her friendly smile and hearty laugh. Nor would she send them home with that special word — Mizpah.

Winifred Koole was the oldest child of five in the family of Jasper and Bessie (Wiersma) Koole. Her father was a painter. Her parents became members of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids soon after its organization. She received her grade school education (K-8th) at the Baldwin Christian School. Her secondary education began at Central High School. She enrolled in college prep.



Miss Winifred Koole

courses and then went to school for two years at Davis Technical High School. Here she took business courses. She has vivid memories of the Great Depression Years of the 30's. She did office work for several years and then took a four-year college course (in three years and three summers). She graduated from Calvin College with an AB in Education.

Miss Koole began the first of the twelve years she taught at Adams with forty-five pupils in grades five and six. This she remembers as a very discouraging and difficult start for her teaching career. The next eleven years of teaching at Adams were much more enjoyable, although for the most part the classes were 35-40 pupils and many times she taught either grades four and five or grades five and six.

Only three years after the inception of the school, the churches were rocked by the Schism of 1953. Many parents decided not to send their children back to Adams in the fall of 1954. Miss Koole remembers with fondness her sixth grade class because three of the students who returned that year entered the teaching profession and became her colleagues. One of these students was Tom DeVries, who has just taken Miss Koole's place in the fourth grade at Hope.

In 1962 Miss Koole moved to

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and taught the fourth grade there for twenty-seven happy years. During her tenure at Hope she worked on her Master's degree in Library Science. She used the skills that she learned to set up the library at Hope School and supervised it for many years. She relinquished her duties for a few years to Mr. Huiskens and took over the responsibility again when he went to teach at Covenant Christian High School. At present she is devoting part of each day to work in Hope's library.

Miss Koole is known lovingly by her twenty-three nephews and nieces as Aunt Win. She has many grand nephews and nieces and is great-grand aunt of four nephews and nieces. One of her nephews is a professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, and another of her nephews is a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches. She has a niece, a nephew, and a grand-nephew who are teachers in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

Miss Koole has been an active member in the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute since its organization thirty-five years ago. During the first ten years of the publication of the *Perspectives*, Miss Koole was the Business Manager of the magazine.

Miss Koole is well known for her enthusiastic teaching style and

for her love for children, and she is remembered by her former students as the teacher who read the *Little House on the Prairie* books, who permitted them to have Herm and Hermina (the word worms) on their desks when it was their birthday, and who told the best Bible stories. It is the latter for which she wants

the most to be remembered.

We know, Miss Koole, that it feels strange, still, to have no papers to grade and lessons to plan. We wish you God's blessing in these days of a more relaxed schedule.

Miss Koole, we have learned it well. We say, Mizpah! ■□■

FEATURE

The July, 1988 issue of "Mid-America Messenger" carried an editorial by Rev. Nelson Kloosterman which we thought to be especially thought-provoking. Rev. Kloosterman is professor of Ethics and New Testament Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary, in Orange City, Iowa. He wrote, for the "Messenger," a series of articles on Christian education; and this one in particular seemed likely to give pause to parents and teachers alike. We asked therefore for permission to print it in Perspectives. Here it is:

Christian Day Schools, What Controls Them?

Rev. Nelson Kloosterman

Last time we isolated what we think are three essential components of Christian day school education: *perspective*, *purpose*, and *process*. They answer the *What?*, *Why?* and *How?*

This time around we're planning to look at the *what* of Christian day schools. But before we get down to business, we need to take our mental vitamins; otherwise we'll tire out down the stretch. We need two vitamins in particular, both of the C-group: Vitamins C₁ and C₂. Vitamin C₁ contains parental Confidence that along with your child God gave you *competence* to nurture that child "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4; as I write these lines near Father's Day, I'm reminded that the apostle didn't delegate that duty!

Read on). The instructions came along with our children – in the Word, of course! You parents are the divinely ordained nurturers, instructors, pedagogues. Surely not the state! Just as surely not the academic “expert.” Both will at some point along nurture’s way try to convince you that you can’t *really* do a good job. After all, what do you know about the latest educational theories, sociological studies or pedagogical techniques?

Never mind, just take your vitamin. The one spelled c-o-n-f-i-d-e-n-c-e: *you* must nurture your children, and because you must, you can.

Vitamin C₂ provides parental Courage for deciding how and what your God-entrusted children will learn. Confidence without courage is like learning how to swim . . . on the lawn! You’ve got the motions down, but you don’t dare get wet. You’re sure you can swim – why, just look at this kick and that stroke. But you never really *test* your ability, out of fear, perhaps, of failure. Many things stimulate parental courage in determining the education of their children, but probably the best stimulant is remembering that the Lord holds you – not Jason’s teacher or Amanda’s principal – accountable for the formation of your Jason or Amanda. Courage grabs hold of, and puts power in, parent *controlled* Christian education.

By the way, these vitamins of Confidence and Courage are not the take-’em-if-you-need-’em sort. They come by prescription: “You shall teach [these words which I command] diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:7).

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

Sit in your house. . . walk by the way. . . lie down. . . rise up. Where do we find Christian schools in *that*?

“Look,” you say, “I spend quality time with my kids at home, reading Bible stories together, working hard on catechism (oops: church school) lessons, teaching them what they need to know about the Lord.”

To which we simply must reply, “Praise the Lord!”

I mean that. If there’s any heartache for those who love Christian education, it’s that far too many of us are using Christian schools as a *substitute* for parental nurture.

But let me ask you something. Do you also spend time teaching your children how to write Grandma a clear, neat thank-you note for the birthday present she never forgets to send? Do you also relax with the kids to the sounds of Beethoven or Bach? Have you chatted

with any of your children recently about Gorbachev or Khomeini, or about the next shuttle launch and whether it should be manned or unmanned?

Notice: too many of *us* are leaving it up to the school. We — you and I — expect that though we thoughtlessly switch on Rock-95 or Country and Western, our children will learn to love music. . . at school. We barely get past the comics, but expect our kids to learn appreciation for good literature. . . at school. We ain't got much use for grammar (or spelling), but they'd better learn it. . . at school.

True, they must learn love for music, math, literature, grammar, and all the rest, at school. We'll come to that in a moment.

But the point to press first is that spending "quality time" nurturing our children has to involve more than taking them out of school to go with us to the state basketball tournament. Home nurture has to be consistent with school nurture! There has to be a correspondence between home and school. If it's wholesome marches in 6th grade band, why are we settling for Bruce Springsteen at home? If it's "Paradise Lost" in 12th grade lit class, why be satisfied with "Tour of Duty" at home?

And that brings us back to finding *Christian schools* in Deuteronomy 6:7. If home nurture is the source and context for school nurture (careful now: I've just slipped a bunch of assumptions past you there!), and if day school education is really necessary in modern society (an interesting discussion topic), it seems to me beyond argument that *Christian* parents will want — and must have — *Christian* day schools for their God-given children.

Consistent Christian nurture, whose tenor is set in the Christian home, whose tone echoes in the corridors and classrooms of the Christian school — that's what Deuteronomy ~~6:7~~ prescribes.

□ □ □ □ □ □ □

Now's the time for those vitamins to release their energy. Remember: Confidence and Courage.

For if the Christian home sets the tone for the Christian school, it also picks the tune. Parents (ought to) control their school.

Do you?

We must be careful here, not to be confused by the claims of what's been called "sphere sovereignty." Abraham Kuyper coined that phrase years ago when Dutch education was under the thumb of the state, to call for schools free (hence, "sovereign") from government intrusion. For Kuyper, life's relationships were like pearls on a string: home—school—church—state—labor. Each of these was a "sphere" with its

own “laws” of operation, its own domain, its own authority. Today people like to lump them all together and talk about their “kingdom vision” for Christian politics, Christian economics, Christian education, etc.

At least two cracks in this theory were spotted by Dutch thinkers who lived after Kuyper, people we don’t hear much about in North America. One defect is that if you view all these “spheres” like pearls on a string, the *church* loses its biblical uniqueness and preachers no longer dare to be too specific anymore about the economics and politics and science of their parishioners. The other problem — and I suspect you’ve seen this firsthand — is that the church’s *confessions* are ruled irrelevant to “Christian” educational, political, economic and scientific enterprises. Let the church (with her confessions) be church, but let the school be . . . free, to make her own.

Our point here is that if the Christian home sets the tone, it also picks the tune.

And now the educational “sovereigns” may begin nervously fingering their diplomas and clearing their throats. “What do you mean, parents pick the tune? Who’s the expert — they or we? Who took courses in Educational Theory and Child Psychology and Elementary or Secondary Ed?”

There you have it — the primary, most fundamental, absolutely crucial issue involved in the “what,” the *perspective*, of Christian day school education: whom does God authorize, through His Word and His providence, to teach *your* children?

We need perspective before process, the “what” before the “how.” Before asking where the bucks go in Christian education, we’d better know where the buck stops. ■■■

VIEWPOINTS

Where should I go to college? That’s not the most vexing question faced by our young people today, but it is an important one. Sometimes the answer to the question is practically dictated by vocational requirements, by geographic considerations, or some other special circumstances. But more often than not it isn’t. Usually one has to weigh the options available. Usually, too, those options include institutions both Christian and secular. And that can present problems. A serious-minded child of God will wonder, how should I make that choice? Given the differ-

ence in the nature of the instruction which one can expect to receive at the Christian versus the secular; given the purpose of all education; given my own educational goals, as I've sought to determine the will of the Lord with respect to my calling in life — given all of that, what considerations in choosing a college may I see to be legitimate?

*Hard questions these are, requiring a good deal of sanctified judgment. We thought therefore that it might be helpful to have the question looked at from several different points of view in our "Viewpoints." Accordingly, we asked a college student, Erika Pipe (a member of our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church), to reflect on her choice of a state university. In order to gain also a parent's perspective, we asked Erika's father, Mr. Tim Pipe (who himself attended a Christian college), to give his view of the matter. And, finally, we turned to Mr. Jon Huiskens, a graduate of Calvin College and for twenty years registrar at Hope College, to explain why he is inclined to steer young people in the direction of a Christian college. Jon informed us that a couple of years ago he had written a similar article for *Beacon Lights*. So, with permission, we've reprinted a good part of that article.*

Here, then, are their thoughts, for your consideration:

Attending a Secular College

Erika Pipe

College was something I had looked forward to for many years. During my high school years, brochures from colleges and universities all over the United States poured into the mailbox. At first I thought it would be great to attend a college/university that wasn't close to home. However, after looking at the cost of room and board, plus tuition at some of these schools, I decided to live at home and attend a school within driving distance.

After much thought and many discussions with my parents, I chose Grand Valley State University, a secular school. There were two reasons for my decision. First of all, I wanted to receive a good education. After talking with advisors and with people who were attending GVSU, I felt confident that I would get a good education at Grand Valley. Secondly, although I wanted a good education, I didn't want to spend

\$8,000-\$10,000 per year for tuition. At GVSU my tuition was under \$2,000 per year. Because the tuition was affordable for me, I hoped to complete my college education and be free of tuition debt.

I must admit that I was more than a little afraid when I started my education at Grand Valley. All of a sudden the realization hit me that for the first time I might be the only Protestant Reformed person in a class. I was going to be the "exception" and not the "rule." I asked myself, how would the professors teach their classes? What if I were called on to say how I felt on certain issues? All my life, I had teachers who taught every subject from a godly perspective. God created the world. God created numbers. History is the unfolding of God's plan for mankind. Our whole life is centered in God's Word.

Now, I had to take a Geology class that used a textbook that was introduced by the theory of evolution. I had a Philosophy course that praised Socrates and the "thinking" man in general.

I also asked myself if I would be able to have friends at a secular university. What if I not only felt like a fish out of water, but looked like one, too. Without a doubt, many questions were milling around in my mind.

Keeping in mind that I have had only one year of education

at GVSU, I will try to answer some of the questions I had before I started.

It is my feeling that most of the professors are careful not to offend anyone's religious beliefs. In my Philosophy class I felt compelled to answer the teacher's question on whether man has a soul, and if he does, how did he receive his soul. With my heart thumping wildly, I raised my hand and answered that I believed man had a soul and that God created it. I waited for the ridicule, but none came. In fact some students agreed with me. There were others, however, who thought man had a soul, but were not sure how he received it. The professor did not say how he felt, but all the ideas presented seemed fine to him. Certainly, there were some courses that had ideas that were contrary to Scripture, but also many that were quite good, such as my English and History classes.

And, yes, I have met new people at Grand Valley. It is amazing how people from various Christian schools are able to find each other at a university whose student body numbers in the thousands.

There are also quite a few people that attended Covenant Christian High School that go to GVSU. Every day during breaks between classes, many of us meet somewhere on campus.

Even though I have not wanted to be involved in extra-curricular activities at Grand Valley, I have never felt isolated at school. The only thing I desire to gain at this school is an education that will enable me to become a teacher.

It is my prayer that the many

years of thorough Christian education received in my home, at Adams Street Christian School, at Covenant Christian High School, and in my church will help and guide me to achieve this goal. ■■■

Are Secular Colleges an Alternative?

Tim Pipe

Any discussion of our children and college education must begin with establishing the proper perspective. If we are Christian, God-fearing parents, then our motives and methods in assisting our children in the choice, first of all, whether to attend college, and then, what college to attend are governed by our beliefs. Our calling in all things is to serve our Father in thought, word, and deed; and this principle should be applied also as we and our children face the issues of college education.

Preliminary to any advice given by parents on which college a child should attend there would have been approximately eighteen years of some emphasis, in the home, on education. To a greater or lesser degree, all parents put some value on education and its purpose. We would be hard pressed to find a person that

could disagree with the assertion of Solomon in Proverbs 1:3-7 that "a wise man will hear and will increase learning." It is obvious that the knowledge and wisdom of Proverbs are of a spiritual nature; but it is also apparent that there is a theme which gives value to the instruction that distinguishes us from the fool. Proverbs 15:2 states that, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." This discussion does not logically leave us with the assumption that all children must attend college. It does, however, speak of a never-ending obligation, on our part, to increase in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, if the talent and the means are present we, as parents, should promote college education with our children.

In a society which is demanding more and more special-

ized skills in the job market, parents must recognize that their advice regarding education can affect their children's entire lives. It is not wrong to discuss the job market, salaries, and educational requirements. As future parents, our children must realize that they too will support families. They should also understand their obligation to support our churches and schools with their prayers and financial gifts. Financial concerns, when one makes career choices, are not primary, but they are very pertinent to the matter at hand.

An even more important consideration is the fact that as Satan becomes increasingly more deceitful in his attempt to lure us from the truth, we should arm ourselves and our children for this struggle. A proper emphasis on education is a tool in this arena. We and our children should be knowledgeable about current events, we should be literate, and we should cultivate oral and written communication skills. Our children must be able to understand what is happening in the world and they must be able to speak and write about what they see. These skills can and should be applied, also, as we interact with fellow believers. We must be able to understand the Scriptures and to express ourselves thoughtfully and clearly. The instruction of college educa-

tion can then, when applied by the work of the Holy Spirit, be very worthwhile in the life of a believing child of God.

But our subject is a bit more focused than whether college education is necessary. The previous views are, however, important to a discussion of whether a secular college can be an alternate choice. I am not prepared to make a concise judgment one way or the other but I can relate some pertinent experiences. Some important considerations are the curriculums at the particular colleges and whether credits are transferable. Also, if your child needs financial assistance there are major differences in available funds. The proximity to your home is also a factor. The environment and atmosphere of a particular college and whether your child is socially active is something which should be carefully considered. College campuses can provide many distractions and temptations.

One of the considerations that we will mention separately is the matter of cost. This is mentioned separately because, for one thing, it is very significant and, for another, in many cases it is the final consideration. Even where there is a total commitment to Christian education, many people now feel that our private Christian colleges are no longer institutions that preserve the truths that we

hold dear. If this is true, does it make any sense to pay the significantly higher tuition/housing costs compared to the state colleges and universities? I do not feel that cost can be the only consideration, but it certainly is being weighed against benefits by many potential students. My feeling is that, when examining different colleges, parents and children should discuss all of these issues completely, and cost is a fair topic.

I am not promoting a decision to attend a secular college based strictly on cost. I do feel, however, that we must take a critical look at what is happening in the Christian colleges. I attended a local Christian college several years ago. At that time chapel attendance was mandatory, and a major issue was the publication of a satirical issue of the *Banner* called the *Bannaner*. Now, at that same institution, chapel

attendance is practically nonexistent, and the major issues are the infallibility of Scripture and whether the literal presentation of creation is accurate. I bring this up only as an observation and not as a judgment. It is sad to think that if our children choose to attend a Christian college we must prepare them by alerting them to some of these differences.

I do believe in Christian education at every level and, referring back to our opening statement, we must prayerfully consider how we can best serve God. Attendance at a Christian college should be the first option considered — simply to show support for the principle of Christian education. If after careful consideration that option does not seem to support what we and our children feel college education should offer, then attendance at a secular institution is a legitimate alternative. ■■■

Choosing a College

Jon Huiskens

Many young people are deciding, about this time of year, where to go to college. In the process of making this decision of where to go, many of you are going to have to face squarely the question of what type of institution you will attend: will it be a Christian college or a

secular one? My preference is for the former, the Christian college, and the purpose of this article will be to demonstrate why.

To write an article addressing this question and have it apply to different groups of people in different places is a difficult

charge — for several reasons. First, our churches are located in diverse settings — both rural and metropolitan — which means that access to college may be near, within commuting distance, or far, which may necessitate living on campus or in housing nearby. Second, our young people have diverse interests, which means that, depending on one's vocational and/or educational goals, choices of colleges may be limited to those who offer a specific program. Third, our parents have diverse expectations and requirements of higher education, which means that some may take the attitude that the college down the road is good enough, or it may mean that some will want "the best" for their sons or daughters.

Fact is, our young people have pursued higher education both at Christian and at secular colleges and universities. No one has insisted that one ought to have priority over the other. As noted above, many considerations come into play here, and they should. Parents and their sons and daughters will need to discuss these matters together and come to their individual conclusions. What I write here is based upon my own experience and is my own opinion. All I can hope for is that you will consider what I have to say in making your decisions. . . .

That we are supporters of Christian education there is no doubt. Our entire educational system is testimony of that. That commitment, however, has never been extended to higher education. There has been much talk about establishing a Protestant Reformed college. Such an institution would help, no doubt, in one's decision about where to go to college. But that idea is not very practical today. To establish a teacher-training program, for example, as some have suggested, is practically impossible to do. The State of Michigan has not approved any new teacher-training programs in the last 15 years. And the one proposal it did have, from an already established institution, was rejected. So what is left to consider are public institutions, private institutions which have become secular, or private institutions which still actively proclaim a Christian perspective. So, given the options, how is a person to decide?

In order to answer this question for myself, I was forced to go back to my own upbringing in an area of the country (yes, contrary to the thinking of many Michiganders, there are other legitimate states in the union) where my parents had to decide already at the elementary level where we were to go to school. There were two options: the local Christian school or the local

public school. There was never any doubt (and that was confirmed again by my father in recent discussions) where we were to go. Public education was not an option as long as there was an existing Christian school. Why was this so? The most obvious reason was that one was Christian and the other was not. . . .

I see no reason, now, why that same thinking ought not be applied to the selection of a college. But, it seems that many of us lose our conviction here and turn to preference. The line of reasoning we use to send our children to local Christian schools seems to end at the conclusion of high school education. It seems, then, that any college or university is fair game for our children to attend.

I know that there are reasons given for that approach to choosing a college: finances, closer to home, program of study, etc. And, I will admit that oftentimes these considerations are real and need to dictate how our decisions are made. The question I want to raise, however, is whether the matter of Christian vs. secular college or university is made a consideration here. Do we, as parents, and do we, as students, make that a *primary* consideration in our college choice? My hope is that we will and that we do.

Why so? The answer follows

directly from what has gone before: the choice is between an institution that is Christian — Christian in its mission, Christian in its perspective — or an institution committed to a secular perspective and a secular mission. What you can expect from a secular college is a secular perspective on history, on man, on the world. What you can expect from a Christian college is a Christian perspective on history, on man, and on the world.

This is not to say, however, that you will be able to agree with everything that is taught. But, at least, the people with whom you deal will approach problems and solutions differently and you can expect your professors to understand what you are trying to say.

If the decision, then, is to choose a Christian college because it is that — Christian — there are going to be certain things that are necessary for you as a young person to understand. First, you will have to be a person of discernment. You are going to encounter new ideas and perspectives and beliefs and philosophies with which you don't wholly agree, and you will have to be able to sort out what you can embrace and what you can not. Second, you will have to be a person with courage — courage to speak your mind and courage to hold on to your beliefs whether that be in classroom discussions

or in “bull sessions” with your peers.

The results can be very positive. If you come to college with convictions and with the ability to articulate, tactfully, those convictions, the result can be that you will be strengthened in those convictions. Just the fact that probably for the first time in your life you will not be able to rely upon the old phrase, "I don't believe that, because my church doesn't believe that" and will have to defend yourself can be a refining, sharpening experience.

So, I come back to the beginning. We have never insisted that a Christian college be a requirement. In some cases, that would not even be possible to require. Some programs just are not available at a Christian college; many technical and vocational programs are offered only at the local community college. But, where there is choice, I would urge our young people to attend a Christian college. There is much to be gained, I believe, if they do. What, for example, would one who is going to be a

medical doctor or a nurse prefer in his training, a Christian perspective on health care or a secular one? Or, if one is going to be a teacher, what would be preferable, a Christian perspective on education and on the child, or a secular one? The list could go on.

Some final words for anyone who is going to college. Keep in touch with your parents, your minister, and anyone else who can help you through the difficulties of college life. We often think that once you become a college freshman, you automatically become an adult. My experience has shown that much maturing goes on during college years, and the more help and guidance you have, the better off you'll be.

As for me, I've talked with many young people and am willing to help, even if you are going to some other school "down the road." My view of where to go may be somewhat biased after spending more than twenty years at Hope College, but I believe that I am open enough to help you wherever you choose to go. ■■■

EXAMPLE

We may occasion other men's sins by example, and the more eminent the example, the more infectious it is. Great men cannot sin at a low rate because they are examples; the sins of commanders are commanding sins; the sins of rulers ruling sins; the sins of teachers teaching sins.

Ralph Venning

SAVORING SCIENCE

Musings

John M. Faber

"And He made the stars also." When I read that statement in the first book of the Bible I remember when I was a boy in the country, lying on my back in the grass, looking up into the sky. We were far from the city lights which tend to dim the starlight. And I thought there could be no room for one more star, for the sky seemed to be full of those sparkling lights! Then I wondered about their makeup and their function. I remembered that the Scriptures tell me that God made them to be bearers of the light that He made in the beginning. The heathen astrologers explain their multiplicity by saying that their gods flung them out by handfuls and scattered them through the skies. Well, it does look like that, but I know that God set them in their places and in their courses.

We know that the sun and moon seem to travel from east to west because of our vantage point on this earth, which daily revolves upon its axis; and the seeming movement of the stars is likewise so determined. But we

also know that some are sent on special courses, and some are wandering stars to picture God's speech concerning those who "have followed Balaam, and are reserved to darkness for ever." Outer space.

Space. What a perplexing thought that is! Sometimes I see that word when it means a certain measure of distance between two points on earth. Astronomers tell about light-years, meaning the distance over which light can travel in a year's time. That is such an astronomical figure it boggles my mind. One light year is some six billions of miles. That is how stellar distances are measured!

This past summer the newspapers told about a space probe by a man-made object sailing past the well-known planets, Saturn and Uranus, and even giving a close-up look at Neptune in 1989. They called that thing, Voyager, and that trip took twelve years and went four billion miles! That well-planned trip tells me that the scientists could bank on the fixed position of the stars in

order to steer their craft so accurately. And electronic pictures were sent back to earth to prove that accuracy. I remember that with their telescopes they have discovered a spiral nebula, made up of billions of stars; too many to count. No one knows how many stars have been created just to make up that one constellation. That concept of space goes beyond my contemplation — way beyond that fifty-foot space between my house and my neighbor's; or the space in my kitchen taken up by the cupboards; or the space needed to stop my car on the road in an emergency.

Putting my newspaper aside I pondered some more about that five-letter word, space. Then I thought in my musing that it is something like God's greatness, in its limitlessness. I thought that space is not *like* God's greatness, but it is a speech of God to show me that space is a *symbol* of God's greatness. It is, as it were, a translation of it in non-spiritual terms. Then I remembered that all God has made, all the various forms of creation, are words of speech for mankind. I know that every speck of creation is a revelation of the Creator to His creatures. And we who are Christians should strive to study that speech to learn more about our Covenant Triune God. Musing about that makes me realize how little I think about the

air I breathe, the water I drink, the food I consume, and the *terra firma* I can depend on. I see the sin of omission of which I am guilty.

That was on a Saturday night I was thinking about those great distances, and my inability to comprehend them, and what exactly was the speech of God to me. Sunday morning those thoughts still lurked in my mind, and lo, God had an answer for me in that morning service. It was Communion Sunday in our church, and the minister read the Communion Form, as usual. And there it was! My answer! Applying the personal pronoun in the right places, as we should, I heard him read this, "As far as heaven is above the earth, so great is His mercy to me who fears Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed my transgression from me." That Is Great!

In the application of that truth, my pastor, ambassador of my Savior, said that we do not partake of the Communion properties to have our sins removed. I was shown that my Savior's death, pictured in Communion, was the basis for my salvation. Oh the beauty of it, and the simplicity of it, thrills my soul!

At the end of such a service the organist does well to pull out all the stops of the organ to lead the congregation in the full-

100

Toufexis writes, "In Atlanta a mother beats her three children — ages twelve, ten, and eight — with a rolling pin until they are black and blue. In Richmond a man forces his nephew to stand at attention and circles the boy while spitting on him. During a parent-teacher conference in Detroit, a woman grabs her twelve-year-old son, hits him in the face until he bleeds, then punches him in the ribs and walks out of the room. What did these children

Churning out students capable of earning high grades is not the goal of our schools. Of course it is true that we must prepare our children to be qualified for

do to earn such treatment? They brought home report cards with poor grades."

Toufexis also relates what social workers have noticed. "More and more social workers, educators and police are recognizing that report-card time can trigger a torrent of emotional and physical child abuse. While no national statistics are available, experts in communities nationwide say there is a spurt in the number of children suffering brutal beatings when report cards are sent home."

Two causes for this abuse are cited by Toufexis in her article. Parent expectations and anxiety for the future are parts of the problem. "For one thing, bad grades can unleash parents' anxieties about their social status and their children's prospects. To the poor, success in school offers a way for children to escape impoverished lives. Middle-class parents push their offspring to surpass their own accomplishments. And wealthy, well-educated people routinely expect stellar performances from youngsters."

Another, and very surprising, cause for such parental behavior is also mentioned. "In many families, good marks are equated with good parenting skills. Says Anne Cohn, executive director of the Chicago-based National Committee for Prevention of Child

Abuse: 'Many parents take bad grades as a personal affront.' "

Given *Time's* report as to how seriously report cards are taken by some, it might be amazing to find that report cards are a continuing controversy in educational circles.

A large part of the controversy pertains to how accurate a measurement report cards really are. Sometimes it seems that report cards are a much better measurement of how much television a child will be allowed to watch during the two weeks after report cards have been issued, than a child's actual academic performance. Lawrence Kutner wrote about report cards in his column, "Parent and Child," in the May 25, 1989, edition of *The New York Times*. He reports, " 'One summary score every few months doesn't tell a child where she's strong or weak, and what she needs to do differently.' " Dr. Conoley (a professor of psychology at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln) continued. "The report card serves as a punishment or reward that's too distant from the behavior.' "

Not only is there some question about how well report cards measure students' present performance, there has also been some interesting research done on how well report cards predict "success" in the future. Kutner quotes Dr. Sidney B. Simon, a professor in the school of educa-

tion at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, as saying, "There is no research evidence to support grades as measures of achievement. There's no research that shows grades have any connection with success in future life." It is intriguing to note that the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has not issued letter grades for about twenty years.

The controversy over the accuracy of report cards as a measure of performance centers on what is called "validity" and "reliability." "Validity" means that a grade accurately reflects what the teacher says it reflects, and "reliability" refers to whether different teachers would give the same grade to identical work. Research on validity and reliability of grading systems has gone on for quite some time.

Kutner writes: "There's a great deal of inconsistency in what teachers use to arrive at grades," said Dr. Jack C. Merwin, chairman of the department of educational psychology and former dean of the college of education at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. "It's so idiosyncratic, even within the same school building."

"Measures of reliability in grading have been equally disappointing. Although individual teachers are fairly consistent when asked to grade identical examinations or essays at six month

intervals, the consistency of grades assigned by different teachers to the same essay (known as inter-rater reliability) is much worse.

" 'Inter-rater reliability of grades are quite bad,' Dr. Conoley said. 'Grades for the same essay have ranged from B+ to D- in research on teacher grading.' "

Even with its problems, the report card system is here to stay. This is partly because it has already been around for so long. Kutner quotes Dr. Thomas Fagan, a professor at Memphis State University, as saying, "I recently looked at my father's report card from 1924 - 25. It had the same information as my children's report cards today."

Since report cards have been around so long in a relatively unchanged form and are unlikely to change any time soon, we might as well take a peek at some tips passed on by Kutner on how to evaluate report cards.

"When you talk with your children about the report card, focus on their experiences in their classes rather than on their grades.

" 'Parents need to ask their children, 'What did you learn?' not 'What did you get?'" said Dr. Simon."

There are times when the learning does not stop after the test is taken. Some children learn some facts better after going over

their test mistakes at home. Such improvement might be noticed, but is not likely to be reflected on a report card.

Rewarding students for their work has been discussed in an earlier issue of *Perspectives*, but Dr. Thomas Fagan says, "Lavish rewards are not necessary. Simple praise is often just as effective."

Finally, Kutner writes, "Variations in grades from course to course are to be expected from any child. Treat a significant drop in grades in several courses, however, as a warning sign that something may be wrong."

Here are just a couple of additions to Kutner's list. Report card grades (and test grades) are not created equal. There are chapters in some textbooks which are more difficult than others. A slight drop in test, and therefore report card, grades might be expected. Also, there are times when a teacher might change the format of tests. Maybe the teacher felt that a different style of test would cover the material which was studied a bit better, or perhaps there was not time to produce a test so the publisher's test had to be used. Changes, for

the better or the worse, could be expected under such conditions.

As a final addition, report card grades might also reflect certain personal interests of students. A student who loathes studying about flowers and trees, or some other topic, might also see his grades decline.

Certainly, report cards should not be the only means of communication between parents and teachers. Attention should be given to the daily papers which are brought home. Obviously, this is far more applicable in the elementary grades than in the higher grade levels, but, still, inspecting such daily papers should prevent "report card shock" brought on by an unexpected turn for the worse.

Professors, teachers, students, and parents will continue to discuss the merits and shortcomings of report cards for some time to come. As we listen to the discussion, however, do you recognize that small manila envelope protruding from Tom Sawyer's back pocket at the end of this school day? What does it say about Tom, and what will Aunt Polly's reaction be? ■■■

School Memories

The above is a new rubric. What we have in mind for it is short anecdotes (or even longer summaries) of school life, submitted by our readers. The stories may be humorous, or more

*serious; they may be from years long past, or of more recent occurrence. Just think back over your years in the classroom — either as a student or as a teacher — and if you can recall an incident that would be of interest to our readers, please take a little time to write it down and send it to the editor of **Perspectives**.*

I recall that one of my high school English teachers, a Mr. VanderMey, was attempting to demonstrate to us a particular error in reasoning. He said something to this effect: "Suppose I have three children. I find that the first one is something of a crybaby. The second one comes along and he's also a crybaby. Then the third, and lo he's a crybaby too. May I conclude that all children are crybabies?" A quick-witted student replied, "No, that just means that all VanderMeys are crybabies."

To this day I chuckle over that one (the teacher did too, by the way). And it wasn't anything all that important. There must be hundreds of incidents like that, stored somewhere in the memories of our readers. So why don't you do a little probing, see what you can come up with, and then share it with the rest of us.

For this issue we solicited a few, personally. And we got a nice variety — two longer, summary-type stories, and two of the short, anecdote variety. Read and enjoy — and then see if you can top them.

MY SCHOOL REPORT

John M. Faber

My schooling started in a little town by the name of Jamestown, some miles southwest of Grand Rapids. I was five years old when I was enrolled in the first grade. In those days there was no kindergarten class in a country school. So, there I was, in the first grade, ready and eager to have the experience of schooling like my older brothers and sisters had had before me. I cannot remember

much of those early years, but I do remember that it was a two-room school with four grades in each room. That made it easy to "learn above" one's own grade by listening to recitations of the older ones. Looking back, it was that "listening in" business that made it possible for me to skip a whole grade later on so as to finish my seven years of schooling while still only twelve years old.

Finish my schooling? Yes, it was necessary for all school children to have an eighth grade education, so as to be ready for world knowledge we might need in our grownup lives.

A freebie I picked up along the way was the ability to read upside-down printing. That was because I was a lucky kid who sat in the front seat of the row. That seat had the desk upon which the teacher sometimes placed his book, and the challenge to read his lesson material could not be resisted. Looking back, I realize that that was not cribbing — for the answers were not in his book — but it was an avid curiosity, that virtue which draws one on to learn lots of things. I'm glad that I never lost it.

My first six years of schooling were in the public school; the seventh, and last, was in the Byron Center Christian School, which opened its doors for the first time that September. My parents were glad that I could have at least one year under a Christian teacher with Christian textbooks.

After my graduation from the eighth grade, two of my fellow students were given the opportunity to start a ninth grade. But that lasted for a scant month, because we had to stay home to help harvest the onion and celery crops. I am not too sure that the teacher was qualified to teach

ninth grade because I remember that when he was teaching about the parts of a triangle he called the hypotenuse a hippa tenoosie. It's funny how the mis-pronouncing of a word can stick in a fellow's memory for seventy years.

But the fact that I could not attend a ninth grade because of farm work did not quench my thirst for a higher education. From magazine ads I learned that one could take a high school course by mail. I enrolled in such a correspondence course, and did all my studying in my upstairs bedroom, during the evenings, while all the other kids were playing outside in the summer, and around the kitchen table in the winter. Those around-the-kitchen-table games were dominoes, Old Maid, Flinch, and, later, Rook.

At any rate, I finished my study of algebra and geometry without much trouble. But when it came to trigonometry I got lost. That horrible branch of math was just too much for me to handle, with my school master far away in Chicago. He wasn't even a person to me, and I could not relate to such a teacher as one can in school. But I realized that, though it was fun to learn all that, I could not see where I could reap any fruit from such labors.

So I enrolled in another corres-

pondence course called "Automotive Engineering." No, I did not aspire to become an automotive engineer, but I had to sign up for the whole course in order to cover the first part which taught car repair. That course bore the fruit that I landed a job in a garage on Eastern Avenue in Grand Rapids. While I was working there the country got caught up in "The Great Depression." That was a time when men got laid off from their jobs, especially the unmarried men, who had to give way to married men with families to support.

Then I got a job driving for a cookie company and soon realized that was not to be my "thing" for a life-time occupation. Coming into contact with a veteran in the Post Office I was advised by him to try out for the P.O. Exam. Well, that usually required a high school education, which I lacked. But I took it anyway. And because of my seven grades of

formal schooling and my correspondence courses, I passed the exam with a high mark, seventh from the top. That made me eligible immediately, and it was the start of my thirty years of delivering the mail in Grand Rapids.

Besides that secular education I received which bore the fruit of obtaining a life vocation, I have enjoyed a spiritual education. That was received at my mother's knees, in catechism class, in Bible study societies in the church, in Sunday school classes, and in the Teachers' Meetings under the instruction of a well-qualified superintendent. Its fruits were more intangible, but the immediate fruits were that I, myself, might be privileged to teach in each of the above-mentioned places. And although I cannot find Scriptural proof for it, I believe I shall reap additional fruit in my eternal life in heaven.

■□■

SNOWBALLING IN REDLANDS

John Kalsbeek, Jr.

Yes, believe it or not, snowballing was and probably still is, alive and well in Redlands, California.

Although it seldom snows in Redlands, there is snow in the mountains from November through early spring.

Several times each year some of that mountain snow mysteriously appeared on the Hope Christian School yard. You didn't need to be a detective to solve the mystery. The next morning was a giveaway. A couple of the kids always arrived with mittens

SCHOOL MEMORIES

or gloves on while all the others came barehanded as usual. Those with gloves knew that their older brothers had used their pick-up to transport the mountain snow to the school yard.

The throwing of this snow on the school yard always impressed

our little four-year-old son, Dan. He was born in Redlands. One Sunday morning we actually woke up to find a light covering of snow on our yard. When Dan saw it, his immediate question was, "Who threw it there?" ■■■

THE ALBERT FLYTRAP

John Kalsbeek, Sr.

Capturing flies has been a favorite pastime for budding scholars of many generations. One of the most interesting cases of fly-catching of which I am aware dates back to the year 1925 at Byron Center Christian School. Our teacher, Mr. Dewey Westra, would certainly desire no credit for it, but my fellow sixth grader, Albert, would. I vividly remember Albert's frantic gestures as he attempted to

obtain, and finally did get, my undivided attention; and then the satisfied look on his face after he opened his mouth to allow the escape of a captured fly. Needless to say, many an unsuspecting fly, who had the distinct misfortune of gaining entrance into the upper grade room of B.C.C.S. the rest of that year, was treated to the same mouth-watering experience. ■■■

MEMORIES OF SCHOOL

Peter Koole

My elementary school days began in the late 20's and ended in the 30's. I attended the old Baldwin Street Christian School (Grand Rapids) along with my sisters Winifred, Dena, Thelma, and brother John. The entire country was at that time in the midst of a most desperate financial and economic situation.

The Great Depression it is still called by historians. Unemployment was at an all-time high; jobs and work were at an all-time low. That brought dire poverty for many a family in our churches and the Christian schools. State and city welfare programs, the W.P.A., assistance from the church diaconate — by a com-

bination of these we lived and survived. What a valuable lesson and experience in life! It still tempers my thinking on financial and other matters.

Now let's get back to school. Though others may possess a greater gift of memory than I, there are a few events of my school years that are still vivid and alive to my recall. Some of my memories are of the music instruction, which had its place in the schools then as well as now. When the undersigned was in the 5th and 6th grades, I was to my music teacher, Miss VanDam, her boy soprano. When the time came for her grades to give the program for the afternoon Mothers' Club, I was the soloist. The song I sang was an Italian Boat Song. The chorus went like this: "Hark how the sailors cry, joyously echo nigh, Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia." Why she chose that song, I don't know. It must be that the music and words appealed to her. I also remember practicing and practicing at my cousin's house, as they had a piano and a player (also the luxury of a

telephone).

Another time, I sang a solo at an Easter program given in the old Dennis Avenue Christian Reformed Church. I don't recall the song, but this I do remember, that, as soon as the program was over, my first and only concern was to find my mother to hear what she had to say about my singing. Naturally she was pleased and proud of her little boy, Peter.

Being born at home and weighing only 1 pound, 12 ounces at birth, I know I had a lot of special tender loving care, especially from my mother. Dr. Pyle, at the time of my birth, didn't believe that I'd live out the day. But he didn't take into consideration the power of a praying father and mother and the grace of God. God had a purpose and plan, not only with me, but also in my generations.

Let me finish on this note: What exceeds a Mother's love and everyday care? The tender love our Heavenly Father has for all His children dear. ■■■

READERS' FORUM

"Your article on Christian self-esteem was excellent. Thank you."

David Prichard
Corwallis, Oregon

"We are enjoying the articles so much. . . interesting topics!"

Brenda Engelsma
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Good Ol' Days

The other day we opened an old Psalter, and out fell a school financial budget — from 1942. Some of our readers will undoubtedly remember those days — when we did not yet have our own schools; when we were happy to be able to send our children to the Christian schools in the area; when tuition there was low — but the money with which to pay it was just as hard to come by.

The good ol' days. A bit of nostalgia... for those of our readers whose grandchildren are today facing tuition payments, for their children, equal to five years' income in the 40's.

SEYMOUR CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Budget Adopted for 1942-1943

Repairs	\$250.00	Miscellaneous	\$275.00
Light.	125.00	Lots	150.00
Telephone	30.00	Water	50.00
Fuel	500.00	Interest on Mortgage . . .	1,100.00
Insurance.	100.00	Salaries	9,461.00
Supplies.	300.00		
Books	350.00	Total	\$12,691.00

Estimated Income:

Tuition (based on present enrollment).	\$9,970.00
Church Collections	1,250.00
Gifts and Contributions	350.00
Total	\$11,570.00

\$12,691 - \$11,570 = \$1,121 to be raised from other sources.

Tuition estimate is based on the following schedule adopted at the

Society meeting:

1 child.	\$1.50 per week	\$ 60 per year
2 children	\$2.00 per week	\$ 80 per year
3 children	\$2.50 per week	\$100 per year
4 children	\$2.75 per week	\$110 per year

* * * * *

Thought we would include also a picture which, though it doesn't date back quite so far, is nevertheless an oldie. Recognize any of the faces? They belong to South Holland's 1963 graduating class.





Back Row: Rich VandenBerg, Robert Poortenga, Art Boer, Jim Bruinsma,
John Heys, Mr. Henry Kuiper
Front Row: Anna (Boer) Staggs, Judith (Bruinsma) Kalsbeek, Joan Regnerus
Anna Mae (DeYoung) Postma, Beth (VanBaren) VanUffelen

PARENTS' CORNER

When Danny Holstege began kindergarten at Adams Street Protestant Reformed School in the fall of 1988, he represented the third generation of commitment to Protestant Reformed education. Danny's grandmother, Jan (Stursma) VandenBerg, was in the fifth class to graduate from Adams Street, and his grandfather, Len Holstege, was one of the early graduates of Hope PR School. Danny's parents, Jim and Kathy Holstege, attended PR grade schools and are graduates of Covenant Christian High School.

In a recent issue of Perspectives, we interviewed Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Engelsma, parents of twelve, about their 40-year involvement with Protestant Reformed education. In the following article, we share with our readers the thoughts and expectations of a young couple at the very beginning of their "education" — their education as parents and supporters of one of our PR schools. The interviewer is again one of our Perspectives staff members, this time Mr. Gary VanDerSchaaf.

GVS: What do you think makes a good school?

Jim: First of all, God-centered, Bible-based instruction, in all of the subjects, in the truth of Scripture as confessed by the PRCs. Such a school is possible, of course, only when the parents, and the home-life established by those parents, is God-centered and Bible-based. If the family-life of the home is not God-centered, then any school supported by that family will someday fail. Secondly, the teachers have to believe and be like the parents; they, too, must be godly men and women.

GVS: What other qualities do

you think a teacher should have?

Kathy: A teacher should love his job, and love the students he's teaching. It's got to be hard, but a parent wants a teacher to love and treat his child the same as the parent does.

Jim: A teacher's first concern should be with the spiritual side of education. But he should also keep current with educational developments, with the best teaching techniques.

GVS: What do you expect the school to do for your child?

Jim: To prepare the child for life in his or her own family. For my sons, the Lord willing, to be the fathers and heads in their own

homes, and for my daughter to be the mother of her family in her home. That's *my* responsibility, to prepare them for life, and if our schools are parental, their responsibility is the same.

GVS: How would you like to see the home and school work together to achieve that goal?

Jim: The home and school must communicate. Parents must let the teacher know that, if there is any problem with learning or discipline, the teacher can always go to the parents. Teachers must go to the parents, and the parents must give the teachers the assurance and confidence to do that.

GVS: How can parents "assure" a teacher of support?

Kathy: By telling your child, first of all, that what the teacher says *goes*. Never speaking badly of the teacher in front of the child is important, too, I think. It's not good for parents to mean-mouth the teacher in front of the child, and to be so quick to believe anything their child says about the teacher or school. Even if you think your child is right and that the teacher is wrong, never cut down the teacher in front of the child, or another parent, for that matter. Go to the teacher personally and privately.

GVS: Do you think the present system of conferences twice a year is sufficient com-

munication?

Jim: I wouldn't be opposed to more meetings. I don't want a special meeting only when there is a problem. And if things are going well, I want to hear that, too.

GVS: Given the importance of communication between home and school, do you think you have enough "input" in the education of your child?

Jim: The maximum input, I guess, would be home schooling. That's one extreme — 100% input. But we are sending our child to our school, so 100% input is impossible. But I definitely feel it's the parents' duty to do more than sign a few report cards and go to two conferences a year. That's the other extreme.

Kathy: You just expect the school to do its job. I guess parents get kind of lazy in being involved in their child's education.

GVS: What are some ways for the parent to be involved?

Jim: Again, communication. The *home* shouldn't hesitate to call the *school* from time to time. Parents can visit classrooms and learn a little about what their child's class is like. Communication is all-important. A parent will have to help sometime with homework, but the school has to let the home know that there is work.

GVS: Just as a point of

interest, you mentioned home schooling as an extreme. Did you ever consider home schooling?

Jim: No. If the only alternative to home schooling was the public school, we would home school. But our schools do exist, and we think they can do a better job than we can.

Kathy: Part of our baptismal vows is our calling to educate or to see to that education. Regarding formal education, we think that the school can do that better than our home.

GVS: So you're committed to the school. What are some of the ways a parent can show that commitment?

Jim: First of all, make sure that the tuition gets paid, and that it gets paid first. Parents have to make tuition one of the top budget priorities. Secondly, make sure teachers are paid adequately. Many of our teachers could get better paying jobs elsewhere. They make sacrifices to teach our children.

Kathy: And let the teacher know how much you appreciate what he or she is doing. Stand behind the school in the eyes of the children; let the child know that those at school are in authority over him.

GVS: Any other ways to show support? Kathy, you're a pretty fair artist. If you were asked to volunteer your time to teach a few art classes, would you do it?

Kathy: If someone were to ask, I'd do it in a minute.

GVS: How about you, Jim?

Jim: Men have to be ready to be board members. I feel awkward saying that, because I had to turn down a nomination to the board last year, due to extenuating circumstances. But I still think it's a father's responsibility to serve on the board.*

Ed. note: Jim is as good as his word. Soon after this interview he was again nominated, he accepted, and was elected to a three-year term. ■■■

[illegible]

Between the Bookends

Sue Looyenqa

PRE-SCHOOL and PRIMARY

Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by Nancy White Carlstrom, illustrated by Bruce Degen, Scholastic, Inc; New York, NY, 1989, 25 pp., (\$3.50 paper).

This book is quickly becoming a favorite of my pre-school and kindergarten daughters, who love its rhythmic cadence as we “march” through the day with

Jesse Bear in search of things to wear. Not only does Jesse wear "My shirt of red/Pulled over my head/ over my head in the Morning," he also dons "... the sun/On my legs that run/Sun on the run in the morning."

Books like this one take a child's view of something so mundane as getting dressed and stimulate his imagination to include the other "ornaments" of life with which he is clothed each day — all the way through to the hugs and kisses he wears with his pajamas at night.

Warm and humorous and full of the family love that surrounds Jesse Bear like a warm cloak, this book will find a special place in your heart, too.

First Snow by Emily Arnold McCully, A Harper Trophy Book,

Harper and Row Publishers, 1985; 33pp. (\$3.95 paper).

First Snow is a story without words, and one that will elicit a positive response from any three-to-five-year old that has ever had fun in the snow.

Bright illustrations fill every page — even the title page — telling the excitement of the first snow as a family of mice experiences its wonder.

Anyone who has ever perched at the top of an immense snowy hill, afraid to push off on his sled and take a chance on a thrill or spill, will identify with the littlest mouse's dilemma. The author-illustrator gives a wonderful view of things from the top of the hill looking down.

Young children will surely enjoy this book and adults will enjoy sharing it with them. ■■■

INTERMEDIATE-JUNIOR HIGH

Augustine, The Farmer's Boy of Tagaste translated from the Dutch by P. DeZeeuw, J. Gzn.; Inheritance Publications: Neerlandia, Alberta, Canada: 1988, 93pp. (\$6.95 paper).

Though this volume is a small one, it is packed with interesting and relevant information about the life of St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the most notable of the early church fathers.

Augustine began his life in the small town of Tagaste in Northern

Africa, the son of a man called Patricius, a farmer and unbeliever until just before his death, and a devout Christian mother, Monica. This book chronicles Augustine's wayward youth and great spiritual struggles as he journeyed toward the place God had prepared for him in His church, a place of great spiritual warfare against some grievous heresies that were infiltrating the early Christian church. Young readers are introduced to some of these major

heresies: Manichaeism (to which Augustine himself subscribed for a time), Donatism, and Pelagianism.

Advanced intermediate readers and older would find profit in reading a book like this. Though it deals with much historical information that may be unfamiliar to those without much church history background, it is an interesting and inspiring way to be introduced to things of which every young Christian should become aware, events and people that have made an impact on our own Reformed faith. ■□■

One-Eyed Cat by Paula Fox, A Dell Yearling Book, Dell Publishing Co.; New York, NY; 1984, 216pp. (\$3.50 paper).

Ned Wallis is presented with the gift of a rifle by his adventurous uncle Hilary, but his father forbids the eleven-year-old boy to use it until he is fourteen. Ned, however, yields to temptation and retrieves the weapon from its storage spot in the attic one night in order to experience the thrill of using it "just one time." He fires the weapon but once at a shadowy creature lurking near the Wallis' barn and then retreats, unimpressed with

the forbidden gun's ability to bring satisfaction while heavy clouds begin to gather (symbolically) in the sky.

The burden of his disobedience and the deceit required to maintain his secret weigh heavily enough upon the young boy's heart, but his guilt is compounded by the appearance of a wild cat with one good eye and one maimed one. Ned, in anguish of soul, remembers the shadowy figure shot in his night of disobedience and concludes that he is responsible for the maiming of the cat. But how can he ever tell his gentle and trusting minister-father or his suffering invalid mother this awful thing about himself?

This book is a skillfully and sensitively written novel for children, but adults will find this Newbery Honor Book difficult to lay down as well. It deals with all aspects of the disobedience and cover-up as presenting a grievous situation for young Ned until his eventual confession and forgiveness. That is almost more than one would expect from secular fiction of our day. I highly recommend it as good wholesome reading. ■□■

JUNIOR HIGH

Morning Star of the Reformation, by Andy Thomson, Bob Jones University Press; Greenville,

S.C., 134 pp., (\$6.95 paper).

John Wycliffe is the man whose story is the basis of this

historical novel. Called the "Morning Star of the Reformation" because he preceded the actual Reformation period, Wycliffe is primarily remembered for his English translation of the Bible, which became the best translation of the Scriptures into English for a century before William Tyndale's time.

The story is replete with historical facts and figures, interspersed with a few fictional characters representative of those who would likely have lived at this time. It is told from the point of view of one of these fictional characters, one William Ayleton, then ninety years of age. A "contemporary" of Wycliffe, he looks back at the wonderful events God has used to bring the written Word to high, and low-born, Englishmen through His

instrument, John Wycliffe, among others.

From the dusty road joining Leicester to Oxford and the University that was the cradle of the Reformation in England, one follows the young fourteenth century scholar through plague and political and religious turmoil which shaped his life and paved the way for the events of the Reformation in the next century.

This book is fascinating reading: exciting, enlightening, and encouraging for adolescent readers who struggle with their own spiritual battles. The publisher's note preceding the story expresses hope that the reader may be challenged by the story of "an intrepid and brilliant man challenged to treasure the Word and feed upon it for himself." Every home should own a copy of this. ■■■

[illegible]

from the
TEACHERS' LOUNGE

One of the worthwhile projects funded recently by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies was Mr. Vern Huber's research in and writing concerning the history and philosophy of mathematics from a Christian perspective. Mr. Huber, the chairman of the mathematics department at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, has long been a mathematics scholar. And what he submitted to the Federation, after some additional, intensive study, was indeed scholarly work. In the nature of the case, one cannot expect to pick up the 53-page

booklet and practice on it his speed reading skills. A thoughtful reader, however, will be brought to a better understanding of what mathematics is all about — even if some of the mathematical concepts presented are beyond his ken.

We commend Mr. Huber heartily for his work, and encourage him also to take up his pen again and provide for this first work a sequel, dealing more specifically with the application of the principles of mathematics to the teaching of it. The last several pages of the little book provide, perhaps, a hint of good things to come. We quote them here, partly in order to give to our readers a little taste of what the Federation is doing for our teachers, and partly because Mr. Huber's closing comments are very thought-provoking. What follows, then, is an excerpt from:

MATHEMATICS

An Overview of its History and Philosophy

From a Christian Perspective

Vern Huber

It is not our purpose here to discuss particulars of mathematics instruction. However, a few observations are given for the reader's consideration.

The teacher's role is most often viewed as one in which he "tells" students how to perform various mathematical functions. Such instruction boils down to demonstrating, often in a mechanical way, various techniques which will enable the student to do most of the next day's assignment. This is a very efficient method of teaching if our goal is simply to prepare the student to do a selected list of problems for the following day. In the short run, this method gets an A for

efficiency; it might even get an A+ if the list includes some review problems that remind the student of mechanics learned in previous assignments. Another attractive feature of this approach is that it requires less effort on the part of the teacher and student alike. The problem here is that our students have limited memories, just as we do. Long lists of isolated tricks cannot be retained, no matter how often they are reviewed. Some who have extraordinary memories, or who are particularly studious, may proceed happily through most of elementary and high school mathematics before frustration sets in.

We recognize the need to learn the mechanics of mathematics. We would even grant that mathematics cannot be understood if mechanics are not learned. We realize, too, that learning requires a certain amount of rote drill. However, we maintain that if learning mechanics through rote drill is the goal, then we have not taught mathematics, nor has the student learned mathematics.

We propose that, in order to make any meaningful mathematical response to God's creation, we must understand mathematical concepts. This provides us with a goal in our instruction. In order to accomplish this goal, we must first of all teach the necessary mechanics. In addition to this, meaning must be given to mathematical processes so that students learn concepts and relationships between those concepts. This is not a simple task; it requires more effort on the part of the teacher and the student.

In order to accomplish this, we suggest that mathematics be taught from a historical perspective. By this we do not necessarily mean that the teacher reveal names and dates and other details of the historical setting of a given concept, though such information should be included whenever possible. Teaching from a historical perspective requires first of all that we show how a concept or process is developed and, when-

ever possible, explain relationships between various concepts and processes.

Instruction of this type would necessarily be interactive. We suggest the following general approach.

Initially, the teacher would be responsible for developing and explaining the concept at the students' level of understanding. The student would then be required to respond by constructing his understanding of the concept. This would be followed by a period of reflection in which the student would attempt to determine if his construct coincides with that of the teacher. Finally, the teacher and student would together make a judgment concerning the adequacy of the student's construction of the concept. This may result in some alterations in the student's construct, and further reflection by the student. In summary, this approach requires the teacher initially to explain a concept. The student then constructs, and in concert with the teacher reconstructs, his understanding of the concept until both the student and the teacher are satisfied with the student's level of understanding.

Our students should have an awareness of the fact that the mathematics that they see in their textbooks is the result of individual and combined effort of

mathematicians throughout history, and that there were many mistakes made along the way. It is important for students to realize that even the greatest and most powerful intellects in mathematics have made errors. This is necessary, we believe, since many students fear mathematics because they have the mistaken notion that mathematics is infallible, and the people who do mathematics never err.

We have rejected the Platonist's philosophy of mathematics, yet we often teach as Platonists, and therefore students see mathematics from a Platonist's view — as a body of knowledge, perfect and polished, residing in textbooks. It appears to them to have existence entirely apart from any human input. Eventually they learn that this is not the case, but first impressions die hard.

The idea of the conceptual approach to teaching mathematics is not new. Most mathematics teachers agree with this ideal. Many, however, feel that this ideal is unattainable. There are several reasons for this. In the first place, teaching concepts requires more effort on the part of the

teachers. Secondly, students resist learning concepts. And finally, most teachers assume that the conceptual approach requires more time than is available.

We agree that more effort is required. But for teachers who have a thorough knowledge of mathematics, the extra effort should be both enjoyable and rewarding. Students' resistance would cease if teachers at all levels were consistent in using the conceptual approach. Teaching conceptually need not require more time. The ideal that we have presented can be realized. However, it would require a higher level of intensity and devotion on the part of teachers and students.

If this approach is not used, our students, or to make this more personal, our covenant young people, end up holding the bag. And in that bag are innumerable, isolated tricks and devices used to complete assignments. The contents of this bag may represent a kind of mathematics, but it is not the mathematics that satisfies our Christian philosophy nor our Christian commitment to learning. ■■■

We hear also, this time, from the teachers' lounge in Doon — which has long been a good source. Mr. Hunter is the principal there, and the article on computers is one which he used also as an informational note to the parents. Mrs. Hunter was a primary grade teacher in Doon at the time she wrote the article on the teaching of writing to little ones. Now she has a child of her own

to rear. We're happy for her for that. And, finally, we have another poem from Mrs. DeBoer. With the holiday season almost upon us, Viola's reflections on "True Christmas" are timely.

The article on "Christmas Joy" was written a year ago by Mrs. Faber for Heritage's "Heralder." And the poem, "Well Done," was given to us for publication by Miss Hulda Kuiper, long-time teacher in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools in various parts of the country.

COMPUTERS

Skip Hunter

As any one who has visited our school knows, we have two computers. There are times that I field such questions as, "For what are the computers used? Do the kids like to be on them? Do the teachers gain any benefit from them over a typewriter? Do we really have to have them?"

I am not going to try to answer all of these questions in this article, but I am going to discuss three areas. One is, how do the teachers use them? The second is, how do the students use them? And, finally, what other benefits have been derived from their use?

All of our teachers use the computer in some way. Each of us has learned the basics of word processing. This means we can use the capabilities that a computer has over a typewriter. Mistakes do not mean hours of frustration, headaches, and upset stomachs for us any longer. We can compose tests, worksheets, and articles such as these with

much more freedom than a typewriter affords us. Many of the records that the school uses over and over have been stored away on a disk somewhere. This means that these records can be updated without retyping the whole list. Many administrative functions have been made so much easier with our computers.

Our students use the computer in many ways. Even the littlest kindergartener uses a computer as one more way to learn his letters and numbers. Other students use the computer to practice their math, reading, or English. There are programs which help the students to discover areas in science, geography, and health. The upper room is working to become proficient in typing. The seventh and eighth graders also know how to use a simple word-processing program. As we have our computers longer, I am sure that the students will be using them in other, different ways.

Besides being another tool for education, are there any other benefits in having computers in our school? The answer to that is yes. First of all, the world around us is full of computers. There is hardly a work place that does not use a computer in some way. Our students' familiarity with a computer now will help them in times to come. Skills our students gain with a com-

puter will stand them in good stead in high school and even into college. But there is something else that I would like you to ponder. I believe that the computer will be the tool of the devil to bring about the kingdom of antichrist. Is it not good that our covenant children have some computer skills so that they can recognize this evil use? What do you think? ■■■

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO WRITE

Writers in Progress

Barb Hunter

"Ga-ga," the baby says, and mother and father exclaim with joy, "Did you hear that? Baby said his first word, Da-Da! Good baby, we're so proud of you. Come, say it again for me."

The baby takes his first two steps and the news is spread to family and friends. Everyone is proud of the baby.

Not many would say to the baby, "No. It's not ga-ga. It is daddy. Don't say it again until you have it right."

When the baby falls after two steps his family doesn't usually tell him he did a terrible job of walking.

When a child makes his first attempts at writing, he is not always so greatly encouraged by family and friends — especially if it was the wall on which he

scribbled. Even if he has scribbled on paper, our praise is often an empty, "Isn't that nice?" Maybe the child is attempting to draw or even write words. We might say, "Here, let me show you how to draw a house" or "This is the way to spell cat, don't you know?" (Brothers and sisters are good at that one.)

If we consider these first scribbles, drawings, and collections of letters to be a child's very first attempts at communicating with symbols, we should be just as ecstatic as we are when they first attempt to speak or walk. Just think how much praise and encouragement we give to help them speak and walk. How much praise do we give when they first attempt to write?

In our kindergarten and first

grade class we can't spell a lot of words. We haven't learned how to print all the letters yet, nor do we know all the sounds they make. But we are writing anyway, and doing a good job of it. We write the best we can. Sometimes we scribble something that looks like cursive. Other times we draw a picture and maybe write some words. If we know some letter sounds we might write them. When we are finished writing we read it to our teacher and she might type it on the com-

puter or print it as we read it. Then we read it to our classmates. We enjoy writing. We like to share our beginning writing with others. Sometimes it is hanging in the hallway or in our room. We each have a file with our own writings in them and we have our own writing books. Please ignore our mistakes and just enjoy our stories, for we are only just beginning to write. We need lots of praise and encouragement. We are writers in progress. ■□■

CHRISTMAS TRUE

Viola DeBoer

I heard Christmas when upon my ear
Fell the tinkle of a bell, so crisp and clear.
I saw Christmas in the eyes
Of one little boy bursting with surprise.
I felt Christmas in the velvet touch
Of a Christmas dress that meant so much.
I smelled Christmas in the new cut pine
And in the home that I call mine.
I tasted Christmas in the new snowfall
But. . . that really isn't Christmas at all.

For Christmas is a babe, the Son,
The Begotten of God, the Holy One.
Christmas is a birth so low
That Christmas is a manger — yes,
But even more, a cross so blest.
How blest the night when broke open the skies
Resounding with the angelic cries,
Of "Holy, Holy, Holy,
Go to see the birth so lowly!"

And in that stable dark and drear
The shepherds in great awe drew near,
For here was God in human form
And He would bear our sin and scorn.

The star stopped o'er that place of old
And by itself a story told,
As wisemen came searching for
The King who would reign forevermore.

O the miracle of virgin birth!
O the grace of God on earth!

And so the story's told again
Of how our Christ came down to men.
As we search Christmas through and through,
Dear God, give us a Christmas True.
For in that manger is a cross
That God's elect might not be lost.
So now we may, in joy and strife,
Live the Christmas way of life.

CHRISTMAS JOY

Elaine Faber

December is a month of preparation and excitement in the anticipation of celebrating a joyful Christmas. Many homes undergo extensive cleaning. Decorations are bought and displayed. New clothes are purchased for programs and parties. Children try to be extra good and helpful. The days are counted. It is the season to show acts of kindness and love. Cards and gifts are shared and given. For many people it is a joyful time.

So soon this special day is over, and with it the numerous expressions of love and kindness. When one truly experiences the joy of Christmas he continues to give of himself throughout the year, expressing true thankfulness for that wondrous gift of salvation made possible through Jesus' humble birth and suffering for His people.

When then can we show this joy?

Remember those hot summer

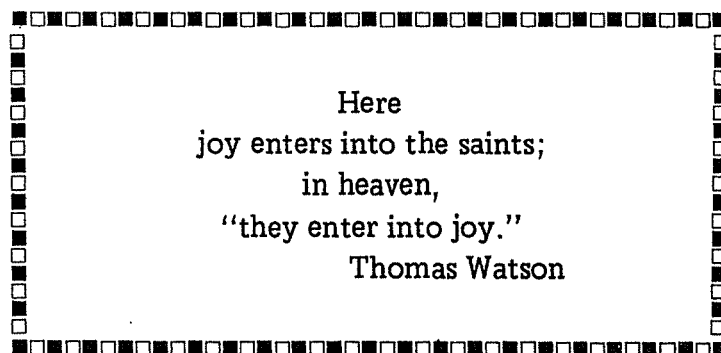
days of last August? Preparations were excitedly being made to get the children ready for the new school year. Many purchases were made then too: new clothes, lunch pails, notebooks, pencil boxes and supplies. It was a lot like Christmas. Excitement mounted as the days went by. The days were counted off. Clothes were laid out as well as lunches made the night before the eventful day. Morning came. Everyone was up early! A good breakfast was prepared and eaten. Good-byes were said, maybe even a kiss or hug given. Children were out early to the bus stop. They were eager to get to their classroom.

A few weeks later. . . . What has happened to that joyful anticipation for school? Mornings begin with everyone trying to get a few extra winks. Children can't find their clothes. Breakfast is perhaps eaten on the run if not neglected altogether. The bus has been waiting and people yelling. Upon arrival at school

one finds mittens, boots, or assignments forgotten or lost. Not much time was spent in preparation for the day's activities. Where is joy now?

Children begin the school day sometimes frustrated because of lack of organization. They have to sort out feelings about themselves before they can go on with their work or express concern and love for others. As parents and teachers we must take enough time to develop these skills and attitudes in our children. We must show by our example and our instruction how to be properly prepared for each day's activities. Children do model the behavior of those around them. When children are prepared to begin the day with good attitudes they will experience joy, Christmas joy, in their life from day to day as they show love and care to those around them in thankfulness for God's love to them.

■ ■ ■



WELL DONE

Hulda Kuiper

The master gave the lesson and the violin bow
To a child so small, one wondered how
Such lovely tones could from those strings be drawn.
But dedicated practice and a perseverance strong
Upheld the lad until the day he was called upon
To play before the kingly throne; ah, then —
Such melody and stirring strains he drew from strings
With bow so sure! His mind and heart uplifted, exulting
In the knowledge he had done his best, he knew that
Thus he served his master with soul and mind and strength,
And heard in joy the long-sought words:
 My son, well done!

So, too, have we been given lives attuned by Him,
The bows of Scripture and of willingness, to use in work and
 play
(Prepared and set before us in all their purpose, good and
 right).
May God give grace and strength that we do not fail but
Daily strive and practice, and in dedication attain the
 highest good
In all we seek to do, to keep our lives in tune with Him!
May our thoughts be pure, our motives right, our words
And actions kind, bespeaking love of Christ within.
Then, when at the end of life's given road we stand
Before the Master's throne, we draw the bow to play
The final gift of praise and present our lives. . . shining
And good. . . His gift returned. . . then, then with gladdened
 heart
We joy to hear Him say those long-sought words:
 My son, well done!

PERSPECTIVES

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